

**Submission  
No 153**

## **INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES**

**Organisation:**

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**Subject:**

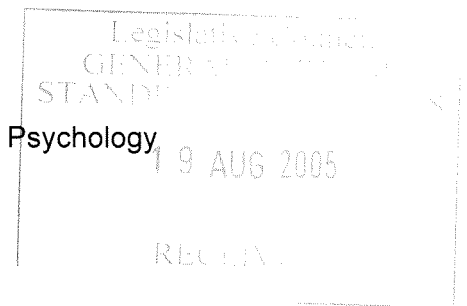
**Summary**

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Lightweight small trains offer the possibility of a low cost, frequent public transport service linking existing town centres. The reduction in road accident costs, particularly among high risk car driver groups, might be a significant benefit which previous rail viability reports have not examined.

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This is a brief submission about special risk groups and public transport.

I am a psychologist and physicist by training. For many years I was an executive member of the Safety Institute of Australia and contributed to the planning of safety practice in this country. I have been a regional airline owner and company director, and have been examining lightweight train options for the past decade. I continue to work in tourism particularly in remote areas.

The North Coast is home to many older people who have macular degeneration. Most of these people still drive although they should not. Their numbers are probably increasing. The area also has many single mothers and unemployed people, who through financial pressure tend to drive unsafe cars. The risks and resulting accident costs are borne by the community overall, and the risk will increase in some ways as additional trucks are introduced onto the roads.

A broader mix of affordable public transport is needed.

The railway line remains intact, and settlement patterns still significantly reflect the railway network. There are maintenance problems on the line, but the cost projections used in studies to date assume that old style heavy trains would be used. A high frequency, lightweight small train could add an effective transport option and would require far less costly line maintenance.

To summarise this submission, certain groups within the community present special needs and special risks. While considering the introduction of further trucks and road improvements, the option of lightweight rail transport might be considered as one step in reducing local traffic.

David Brown  
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